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Research Article

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## EXTENT OF CODE SWITCHING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

The use of two languages in language learning classrooms by English as a second language (ESL) teachers is called code switching. In Pakistan, where English is a compulsory subject and taught as a second language (L2) in its primary, secondary and tertiary level institutions, the educational policy states that ESL teachers must use English Only (EO) as the mode of instruction. However, in reality, most Pakistani ESL teachers opt to code switch to facilitate teaching and learning in their ESL classrooms. This could be due to their L2 learners' lack of expected proficiency in English particularly in the speaking skill even at the tertiary level. In this respect, the aim of this study is to investigate the extent of code switching by three ESL teachers teaching students at three different levels of proficiency (low, medium, and high) in Pakistan. This entails exploring the frequency of turns the ESL teachers code switched, the occurrences of code switched words and phrases in Urdu, and the frequency of types of words and phrases code switched in Urdu according to the three different levels of proficiency. The data includes recordings of four classroom lectures from each ESL teacher which were transcribed and then analysed quantitatively. Analysis of the transcribed lectures revealed that the use of code switching was prevalent, and it was recognised that the ESL teachers practiced code switching based on the learners' proficiency levels. The results suggest that the higher the proficiency of the ESL learners, the lower the frequency of code switching by ESL teachers in the classrooms in terms of the number of teachers' turn which contains code switching, code switched words and phrases, and types of code switched words and phrases. Thus, this research indicates that code switching does exist at different proficiency levels of ESL classrooms in Pakistan in spite of the EO policy by its educational ministry.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Using two languages in English classrooms by English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers seem to be a very common occurrence around the globe (Tien & Liu, 2006; Qadumi, 2007; Then & Ting, 2009; Salah & Farrah, 2012; Bhatti, Shamsudin & Said, 2018; Sime 2019; Kongbang & Crabtree, 2020). This universal phenomenon is known as bilingualism. Bilingualism which is prevalent worldwide entails "adding a world language" such as English to people's "verbal repertoires" (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2006:1) In bilingual society, people produce code to communicate with each other that can be used for any language variety. Switching from one code to another is broadly called code switching (Gumperz, 1982).

Pakistan is one of the south Asian countries where the linguistic phenomenon of code switching is widespread within a course of single conversation. Code switching from English language to Urdu language is a natural practice in Pakistani bilingual society on daily basis in both social and academic settings (Anwar, 2009; Gulzar & Qadir, 2010; Ehsan & Aziz, 2014; Dar, 2016). Both English and Urdu languages are extremely esteemed, one reserved for public and the other for official usage (Anwar, 2009). In Pakistan, English is a compulsory subject and taught as a second language in its primary, secondary and tertiary level institutions. The educational policy states that ESL teachers must use English Only (EO) as the medium of instruction. The EO policy has strictly been enforced at higher education institutions in Pakistan as a mechanism used to “create de facto language practices in educational institutes, especially in centralised educational system” (Shohamy, 2006:76). However, in reality, most Pakistani ESL teachers opt to code switch from their second language (L2) to their first language (L1) in order to facilitate the teaching and learning of English in their ESL classrooms (Bhatti et al., 2018). This could be due to the L2 learners’ lack of expected competency and proficiency in English language particularly in the speaking skills classrooms. Consequently, teachers employ code switching to improve their students’ proficiency of the English language. Hence, the declining level of English proficiency among students has brought about the need to find out how to tackle this issue which is quite sensitive.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *Code Switching*

Wardhaugh (2006:88) pointed out that the term code is a neutral term rather than terms such as “dialect, language, style, standard language, pidgin and creole” which “are inclined to arouse emotions”. Code can be used to refer to “any kind of system that two or more people employ for communication” (Wardhaugh 2006:88).

According to Holmes (1992:50), “Code switching occurs when the speaker shifted their language from one language to another. Code switching is switched essentially between sentences”. In brief, code switching is the shift from one language to another within the same conversation or utterance. In the context of ESL classroom, it refers to the alternate use of the first language and the target language, a means of communication by language teachers when the need arises. For the present study, code switching occurs when a bilingual speaker shifts from one language code to another language code during a conversation (Muysken, 2004). It can occur in alternate turns, within an utterance or between utterances.

### *Code Switching in ESL Classrooms*

ESL classroom is an educational setting where the aim of the teachers is to teach, whereas the students’ aim is to learn a second language. This situation evidently affects communication and its patterns in classroom setting where both teacher who is in charge and the participants are equal.

Canagarajah (2001) conducted a research on the learning process in English classes which were taught by 24 teachers from several selected schools in Jaffna. These participants who were involved in his study were teachers doing their teaching practice at the diploma level at the University of Jaffna. He collected his data while supervising the teachers during their practical training by audio recording and field notes. In this study, Canagarajah (2001) noticed that the students were deliberately changing their code to Tamil. This occurred when the teachers gave an explanation, when the teachers were not aware of it, or when the students performed group activities. Changing the code helped them to understand what were taught by the teachers.

In Hong Kong, another research is performed in which Lin (1996) explored code switching phenomenon at secondary level in English classrooms. The audio is recorded by the researcher in 14 different classes. The size of all classes was big, and the teachers usually dominated the interactions between teachers and students. In this case, code switching was used because the students were having difficulty in learning and using English. Lin (1996) figured out that teachers do code switching usually when teaching grammar and vocabulary with some structured patterns: first, teachers introduce the grammar elements in English, the foreign language, then repeat or clarify the foreign language items in Cantonese. The teachers ultimately emphasize the important aspects of such items in the foreign language, English. This pattern does not appear coincidentally. It demonstrated the same pedagogical activity followed by the teachers.

Salah and Farrah (2012) investigated the usage of code switching to Arabic language in English courses at the primary level in Hebron government schools, Palestine. They explored the degree to which code switching to Arabic was used in the primary English classrooms. The research also discussed which gender in the EFL classroom used Arabic more. The data was obtained from 44 Palestinian female and male EFL teachers with years of experience teaching English. Two female and two male English classes were directly observed to gain

knowledge regarding the real usage of Arabic by teachers and their explanations for using it. To understand how frequently Arabic was used by students and teachers in the primary English classrooms, standard deviations and means were calculated. The research indicated that the Arabic language was often used in primary English classrooms by both teachers and students. This means that often L1(Arabic) can be used to promote learning and teaching processes. In addition, it also revealed that teachers used code switching to Arabic rather than their students in the classrooms, and regardless of gender, there were no major significant variations in the usage of code switching to Arabic in the primary EFL classroom.

Code switching can also be seen to promote language teaching. Tien and Liu (2006) stated that code switching is inevitable in classrooms where foreign language (FL) instructors are very competent in both the L1 and L2. They suggested that in the FL instructors' EFL classes, low-competency students found code switching to be helpful in gaining better understanding, especially when offering equal understanding of classroom procedures. Therefore, instructors have no option but to use code switching to bring information into the classroom for the students' learning of L2. Code switching used by the teachers is not to eliminate the language gap but to clarify students' misunderstanding.

Ismail (2004) conducted a study which looked at the use of code switching in higher learning institutions among male and female lecturers. There were six lecturers; three males and three females involved in her study. The lecturers taught at engineering faculties in one of the universities in Malaysia. She used audio-visual recording and conducted observations of the lecturers' classes to collect her data. Her study mainly analyzed the frequency of code switching and points of code switching utterances in terms of whether the lecturers changed their code at word, phrase or sentence level. Her research findings showed that both male and female lecturers employed code switching in their classrooms. The analysis also indicated that female lecturers used code switching more frequently at word, phrase, and sentence level as compared to male lecturers. This is clear that generally female lecturers are more talkative than male lecturers in the classrooms. Other than that, she also analyzed the functions of code switching used. From Ismail's (2004) study, she found that code switching is used to fulfil the social and academic objectives. Hence, Ismail (2004) concluded in her study that code switching is used more to create better relationship between the lecturers and the students.

Martinez (2010) did a study on Spanglish-speaking students on the United States–Mexico border. It was observed that English language learners (ELLs) mixed their L1 and L2 in early schooling. These Spanglish students employ hybrid language to compensate their lack of fluency in both Spanish and English. Unlike conventional ELLs, these students use the two languages simultaneously to modify the meaning and according to their audience. It was proposed that the students' adept use of Spanglish can be used to improve their academic literary skills. Furthermore, the study implied that teachers may benefit from the students' Spanglish ability as a resource to pedagogically improve their students' language skills.

Sipra (2013) also found code switching as a dominant language teaching aid and suggested that the code-switching between L1 and L2 is helpful for intermediate or certificate-level learners for the learning and teaching of L2. There are a number of reasons for code switching in a language classroom. Among others, it facilitates the overall comprehension of L2 at the earlier stages with the use of L1. Furthermore, the use of L1 is "essential and helpful when there is no other option left for the teacher to define or explain the meanings and connotations of a word or a phrase" in L2 (Sipra, 2013:63).

Gulzar and Qadir (2010) conducted qualitative research to find the reasons for code switching by ten English language experts or practitioners in Pakistan. They utilized the different experiences of the respondents and produced descriptive data through interviews. It is evident from the study that according to the respondents' interviewed, code switching should be utilized to make the understanding of abstract concepts clearer and in English language learning and situations which are challenging to use L2 only. However, it was suggested that frequent or habitual use of code switching should be avoided. One of the respondents even iterated that in documents related to the education policy, there is no clear policy on the medium of instruction to be used in language learning and teaching but L1 should only be used only judiciously on certain occasions which require clearer explanation of challenging concepts.

Another study by Sime (2019) explored the extent of code switching in Ethiopian primary and secondary EFL classrooms. Two EFL teachers were monitored and audio recorded for six sessions (three sessions for each teacher). This analysis was qualitative in its essence, and it adopted a case study as a research method. Since this research aimed to investigate the extent and patterns of the Amharic language and English language use in classrooms at different grade levels, two teachers who were teaching English to the students at different proficiency levels in grade 7 and grade 9 were chosen. For the counting of the total amount of words spoken during the six sessions (three sessions for an elementary teacher and another three sessions for a high school teacher), the

word count processor was used to count the total number of words spoken during the six sessions and then the L1 utterances used throughout the whole sessions. The number of full words spoken by the teachers in each session were then recorded, accompanied by the numbers of L1 (Amharic) words spoken in each session. As for the extent of code switching to L1 in EFL classes, word count was used as research tool, and the average percentage of L1 used at elementary level was 31.9 percent of the overall language use by teachers; on the other hand, 17 percent of L1 was used at secondary level.

The evaluation of the classroom contact transcripts showed that the usage of code switching was widespread in response to the degree and forms of code switching utilized in the EFL classes, and it was noted that the participant EFL teachers practised code switching depending on the grade of the learners. It was also discovered that comparison of use of code switching between the two levels' teachers (elementary and secondary) reveals that there were significant individual variations between the teachers. The Amharic was more commonly used by grade 7 teacher than by grade 9 teacher. Therefore, the frequency of terms in the language of the participant teachers indicates that teachers were naturally more biased towards the TL (English) regardless of their academic levels as well as the grade of their pupils, and moved to the L1 for occasional instances. That implies the volume of L1 used in the EFL class decreases as the educational levels of the teachers and the grade level they were teaching increases, and the extent of the target language increases.

Another exploratory case study was done by Rukh, Saleem, Javeed and Mehmood (2014) on code switching in business students' classrooms. Mixed methods approach was used to investigate the student's attitudes towards code switching used by the teachers. The study incorporated close-ended and open-ended questionnaire to collect data and from the findings of the research, it can be concluded that, business students have a positive attitude towards teachers' code switching, and this phenomenon has a positive effect on L2 learning of the business students.

According to Makulloluwa (2013), code switching was used in higher proficiency classrooms for interaction purposes whereas code switching used in lower proficiency classrooms were more administrative and pedagogical purposes in ESL classrooms in Sri Lanka. He also found the frequency of L1 in lower and higher proficiency classrooms in university of Colombo. The Data was collected by mixed method approach during the years 2010/2011 using three primary research analysis tools: questionnaires, audio recordings, and interviews. Furthermore, two classes were observed from level 1 and level 3. According to the results, it is obvious that the sum of L1 used in the university classroom was primarily dictated by the students' degree of proficiency. The study revealed that teachers teaching in low proficiency levels used the L1 in a significant amount as a useful technique for accommodating the poor language practices of students and also, as a method for developing a less threatening atmosphere. In high proficiency levels classes, it was often used for conversation. Generally speaking, the majority displayed a favourable disposition to the usage of L1 since they felt it enabled the language learning through having feedback more meaningful and also by lowering the effective filter of the students as well. It facilitates language acquisition by making the input more comprehensible and also by lowering the students' affective filter. Based on the results, it is argued that the use of the students' L1 may be a valuable tactic that improves the procurement of TL. He further explored teachers' attitude towards the use of code switching as a pedagogical tool and concluded that code switching used for accommodating students in using L1 by the teachers might be a useful strategy for acquiring target language.

Grant and Nguyen (2017) did another study on EFL teachers' code switching in English language classroom instruction. He found two reasons of employing code switching by EFL teachers who practiced it particularly in English language classroom. He found that EFL teachers practiced code switching for pedagogical as well as affective reasons. The researcher also suggested that code switching is a deliberate and selective method for constructive use in the classroom.

Benson and Abdulla (2017) explored teachers' and students' usage of Arabic in EFL classrooms in secondary schools in Libya and Turkey. The study sought to find the reasons for and the attitudes of using Arabic in secondary schools in both Libya and Turkey. The results of the current research demonstrated that Arabic was employed by both the teachers and students in EFL classrooms in secondary schools in both Libya and Turkey for different reasons. The data collected throughout the questionnaire revealed that the majority of the students in both Libya and Turkey used Arabic when talking with their classmates. Furthermore, the teachers working in Libya mostly used Arabic to explain grammar rules, while teachers in Turkey mostly used Arabic to clarify complicated concepts. In general, the teachers in both Libya and Turkey advocated the restricted usage of Arabic in EFL classrooms. They also believed that teachers should not resort to Arabic except in the cases of clarification, for example, of abstract concepts, difficult tasks, or complicated grammar rules.

Kongbang and Crabtree (2020) conducted a case study on the frequency of code switching in terms of its

functions by more experienced teachers and less experienced teachers in online EFL classrooms on distance learning television. They used Huberman's (1989) teachers' professional experience model to categorize the level of the teachers' experience. Two Thai teachers from the Foreign Language Department who use English as a medium of instruction online at Wang Klai Kangwon School in Thailand were the subject of this research. There were three research instruments used to collect the data in this study: an online questionnaire for teachers, the online classroom videos, and a code switching observation checklist. There were seven functions of code switching that were established from thirty-eight switches from two classroom videos by the experienced teacher. These functions in descending order were: explaining concepts 36.84 percent, then asking questions 18.42%, giving directions of content and exercises 15.80%, translating new words and sentences 13.16%, quoting examples from life 5.26 %, greeting 5.26% and amusing 5.26%. On the other hand, there were six functions of code-switching found from the two online classroom videos of the less experienced teacher from thirty-five switches. They were in the following descending order: asking questions 34.28%, translating new words and sentences 22.86%, explaining concepts 14.29%, giving directions of content and exercises 14.29%, quoting examples from life 8.57 %, and greeting 5.71 %. The results revealed that the overall frequency of code switching in terms of its functions made by the less experienced teacher accounted for 47.95 % of the total which is lower than the experienced teacher, who accounted for the remaining 52.05%. The results indicate that the experienced teacher tended to code switch between Thai and English more often than the less experienced teacher. The findings therefore suggest that experienced teacher employed code switching from Thai to English more frequently than the less experienced teacher. There is also no significant correlation between the teachers' level of experience and the frequency of their code switching.

### *Code switching and EO in Pakistani Educational Setting*

In Pakistan, the medium of instruction is always being viewed with assertiveness by Pakistan's governing political parties (Khurshid, 1987). Each authority normally announces its policy of teaching in English only in all public institutions and instructed to start plans for its success implementation. In contrast, the higher education's ELT reform project aims to improve teaching and learning of English in higher education institutions in Pakistan (Shamim, 2008). As this decision of policy intent is already politically motivated, it comes with no surprise that there is no match between the overall language policy, and current practices in the public sector institutions in Pakistan. Thus, the medium of instruction and language policy therefore are sensitive issues at every level, particularly in Pakistan where students' English language proficiency level is very low (Ahmed, 2011). More specifically, the language policy stays as a living issue on the agenda of every successive government such as Pakistan. In Pakistan, to use EO in foreign language classrooms have created the phenomenon of code switching for effective communication between teachers and learners (Ehsan & Aziz, 2014). Other than that, EO often creates conflict and tension in English language classrooms (Wei & Martin, 2009). Though this issue is unavoidable, it needs to be addressed.

Code switching has an advantage in providing an adequate understanding of speeches among teachers and students. Iqbal (2011) also shed light on code switching as a naturally creative and innovative way of communication of bilingual teachers in Pakistan where it was used as a technique for facilitating students in classrooms. He investigated both male and female lecturers' interactions from fifty different universities of Pakistan. He found three different linguistic features of code switching: Intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and code switching at clause and phrase levels in Urdu and English corpus. These features were used by lecturers very frequently in their classrooms. From this study it is concluded that code switching was used as a frequent phenomenon between two languages Urdu and English by university teachers in Pakistan.

Another study on the frequency of using code switching in Pakistani universities was conducted by Younas, Afzaal, Noor, Khalid, and Naqvi (2020). To explore the extent and functions of code switching, the researchers deployed mixed method technique. Thirty lecturers of BS level from the education department in session 2016-2020 were observed in three different universities in Pakistan. Then data were transcribed to identify the frequency of code switching and the interactive elements that gives the actual knowledge of code switching from English to Urdu language. The frequency of incidents of code switched words were identified and tabulated. English words were observed and noted at the individual level, phrase level, compound level and abbreviations. The data has shown that code switching plays a vital role in Pakistani education system. The extent of code switching was found most at word level than at phrase level. Thirty lectures were scripted to count the cumulative number of terms. These contributed to 36084 words in all 30 transcribed lectures. During ten lectures at the university of Punjab, 13096 terms were used; 9705 words were used in the BZ university, 13283 terms were used at the university of education. Analysis of frequency also illustrated that 3797 English terms used included single lexical words, while 1178 English words were included as compound words, and then 599 words were English phrases. In comparison, 367 abbreviations in English were used. In order to determine if code switching influenced

classroom engagement and student turns, the instructor and student turns were also evaluated. This study found that participants in teaching appeared to use code switching to broaden explanations, give explanations, answer questions, express unity with the students and carry out understanding tests. These code switching functions encouraged the interaction and involvement of learners and allowed smooth development.

Another study by Bashir and Naveed (2015) was an extensive qualitative study that identified functions of code switching. Data from four diploma classes was audio recorded and transcribed. The analysis was done using content analysis. It was found that the teachers code switched and namely for educational and social reasons such as to discipline the students, increase their comprehension, provide examples and create humour in the classroom.

Studies on code switching focus either on overall frequency, functions or types of code switching in English language classrooms in Pakistan. So far, code switching in the Pakistani context does not correspond with the investigation of code switching at different proficiency levels and EO policy. This situation causes problems because currently the universities are aware of the need to use EO in second language classrooms. There is hardly any study which looked at extent of code switching at different levels of proficiency (low, medium and high) in English language classrooms in Pakistan.

Thus, the researcher aims to look at the extent of code switching used by three ESL teachers at different proficiency levels in a higher education institution in Pakistan.

### *The Present Study*

Code switching from English language to Urdu language at three different levels of proficiency (low, medium and high) has not been much investigated in Pakistan although the research on teachers' code switching, namely its types and functions have been carried out in other developed countries earlier. Therefore, the present study attempts to investigate the extent of code switching by three female ESL teachers teaching at three different proficiency levels (low, medium and high). It also aims to explore the frequency of turns the ESL teachers code switched, the frequency words code switched, frequency of phrases code switched to Urdu, frequency of types of words code switched, and frequency of types of phrases code switched at three different proficiency levels classrooms. Thus, this paper addresses the following question:

Q. To what extent do English language teachers code switch at low, medium, and high proficiency levels English language classrooms?

### **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The result provided in this section is drawn from quantitative analysis of classrooms' audio recording transcriptions to respond to the research question looking into the extent (frequency) of code switching to Urdu language used by three ESL teachers in three different proficiency level classrooms in Pakistan. In particular, it aims to find out the extent of code switching used by ESL teachers at low, medium, and high proficiency level English language classrooms. The data is reported separately for each individual lecturer in each level as every lecture was unique in terms of its content. This was done only to point out the considerable difference among the ESL teachers on their English language use and on the frequency of L1(Urdu) use in their classrooms in particular. These variables can contribute towards the code switching occurrence in the interactional setting. The analysis of the data shows a clear pattern of Urdu language used by the ESL teachers. The following three tables show the analysis of data under this topic: the extent of code switching to Urdu language by ESL teachers in three different proficiency level (low, medium, and high) classrooms.

It is observed from Table 1 that the total number of teacher's turn is 249 whereas for the students it is 232 in the low proficiency level classroom for all four lectures. The teacher code switched 121 times to Urdu language from her total of 249 turns in her lectures. The overall frequency of words code switched to L1 (Urdu) in the low proficiency classes is 2803 and frequency of phrases code switched to L1 (Urdu) is 448. Whereas, the frequency of types of words code switched is 779 and frequency of types of phrases code switched to L1(Urdu) is 247. There is no considerable consistency of code switching to L1 from lecture one to lecture four in low proficiency classrooms. However, the frequency of code switched words decreased from L1 to L4 in low proficiency level classrooms.

**Table 1.** Extent of code switching to Urdu in low proficiency level classrooms

Lectures	L1	L2	L3	L4	Total
Frequency of Teacher's turn	86	57	53	53	249
Frequency Students' turn	79	59	41	53	232
Frequency of Teacher's code switching	45	31	21	24	121
Frequency of words code switched	1497	575	408	323	2803
Frequency of phrases code switched	253	93	86	56	488
Frequency of types of words code switched	321	214	123	121	779
Frequency of types of phrases code switched	152	40	34	21	247

Table 2 indicates the total number of teachers' turn is 118 times in the medium proficiency level classrooms as opposed to 126 turns for the students. The teacher code switched 64 times to Urdu language out of 118 turns. The overall frequency of words code switched to L1 (Urdu) in medium proficiency classrooms is 973 and the frequency of phrases code switched to L1 (Urdu) is 163. Whereas, the frequency of types of words code switched is 247 and the frequency of types of phrases code switched to L1(Urdu) is 70. These results show that code switching to L1 is not very frequent in medium proficiency level classrooms in terms of words, phrase, and in terms of types of words and types of phrases code switched as compared to low proficiency level classrooms. Although there is code switching to Urdu language found but there is no consistency of code switching in all four lectures of the medium proficiency level classrooms. Similar to low proficiency level, the frequency of code switched words declined from L1 to L4 in medium proficiency level classrooms.

**Table 2.** Extent of code switching to Urdu in medium proficiency level classrooms

Lectures	L1	L2	L3	L4	Total
Frequency of Teacher's turn	47	28	14	29	118
Frequency Students' turn	42	31	11	42	126
Frequency of Teacher's code switching	26	16	11	11	64
Frequency of words code switched	522	321	75	55	973
Frequency of phrases code switched	72	59	16	16	163
Frequency of types of words code switched	126	60	23	38	247
Frequency of types of phrases code switched	43	25	1	1	70

It is observed from Table 3 that the total number of teachers' turn is 71 in the high proficiency classrooms but the students have a higher frequency of turns which is 101. The teacher code switched only 27 times to Urdu language in her four lectures. The overall frequency of words code switched in high proficiency classrooms is 140 whereas the frequency of phrases code switched is 30. In terms of types of words code switched and types of phrases code switched, the total number of utterances of types of words code switched to Urdu is 109 and types of phrases code switched is only 1. It is obvious from the above Tables 1, 2, and 3, that there is no consistency of code switched words and phrases in all three different level of classrooms. However, there is considerable difference of code switching in terms of the total number of words code switched and phrases code switched as well as in terms of the frequency of types of words code switched and types of phrases code switched among all three levels, that is, they decrease as the proficiency level of the classroom increase.

**Table 3.** Extent of code switching to Urdu in high proficiency level classrooms

Lectures	L1	L2	L3	L4	Total
Frequency of Teacher's turn	17	21	22	11	71
Frequency Students' turn	13	46	18	24	101
Frequency of Teacher's code switching	5	13	7	2	27
Frequency of words code switched	67	45	22	6	140
Frequency of phrases code switched	11	14	2	3	30
Frequency of types of words code switched	37	44	22	6	109
Frequency of types of phrases code switched	1	0	0	0	1

A detailed look at Table 4 for all three proficiency level classrooms (low, medium, and high) clearly demonstrates that the frequency of words code switched to L1(Urdu) in three proficiency level classrooms is 3916. The frequency of phrases code switch to L1(Urdu) in three proficiency level classrooms is 681, the frequency of types of words code switched to L1 (Urdu) in three proficiency level classrooms is 1135, and the frequency of types of phrases code switched among all three proficiency level classrooms is 318.

**Table 4.** Extent of code switching in low, medium, and high proficiency level classrooms

Code switching	Level	N	Total
Frequency of teachers' turn of code switching	Low	121	212
	Medium	64	
	High	27	
Frequency of words code switched	Low	2803	3916
	Medium	973	
	High	140	
Frequency of Phrases code switched	Low	488	681
	Medium	163	
	High	30	
Types of words code switched	Low	779	1135
	Medium	247	
	High	109	
Types of Phrases code switched	Low	247	318
	Medium	70	
	High	1	

Therefore, the findings of this study revealed that teachers code switched to Urdu language more frequently in low proficiency level classrooms in terms of words, phrase, and in terms of types of words and types of phrases code switched as compared to medium and high proficiency level classrooms.

As shown in the table, there are great individual differences among the use of code switching in low, medium, and high proficiency level classrooms. The teachers code switched more frequently in low proficiency levels in terms of number of words code switched, number of phrases code switched than medium and high proficiency levels classrooms. Similarly, the medium proficiency level teacher code switched less frequently in terms of number of words and phrases than the teacher in low proficiency levels teacher. Likewise, the high proficiency level teacher code switched less as compared to the teachers in low and medium level proficiency teachers.

The analysis of this study clearly indicates that the frequency of code switching to Urdu language in low proficiency level is 2803 words out of 3916 words, frequency of code switching to Urdu phrases in medium level classes is 973 out of 3916 words, and the frequency of Urdu words code switched in high proficiency level is 140 out of 3919 words. Similarly, the frequency of phrases code switched is 488 phrases in low level, 163 phrases in medium level, and 30 phrases in high level classes out of 681 phrases. The findings of this study also show that frequency of types of words code switched is 779 types out of 1135 types in low level, 247 types in medium level,

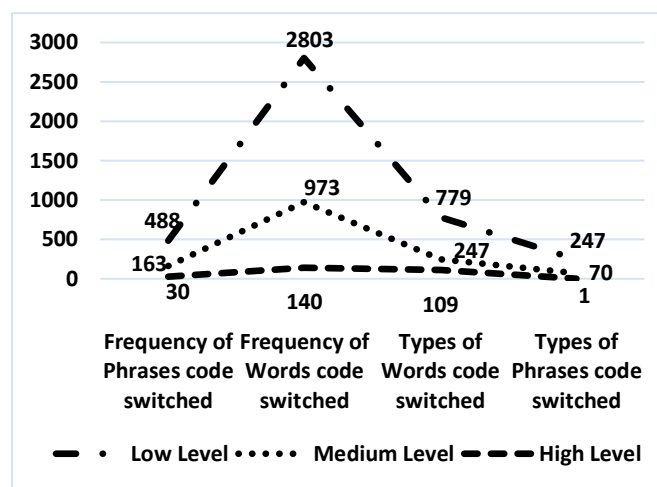


and 109 types of words found in high proficiency level classes. The result of this study also illustrates the frequency of types of phrases code switched in low proficiency level is 247 out of 318 types, 70 types of phrases code switched in medium proficiency level and only 1 type of phrase is found in high proficiency level classes.

The line graph in Figure 1 revealed that there are great individual differences among the use of code switching in low, medium, and high proficiency level classes. Urdu was most frequently used by low proficiency class teacher than medium proficiency class teacher and high proficiency class teacher. Therefore, it is obvious from the findings that the extent of code switching increases when the students' proficiency level decreases.

The results suggest that the higher the proficiency of the ESL learners, the lower the frequency of code switching by ESL teachers in the classrooms in terms of the number of teachers' turns which contains code switching, code switched words and phrases, and types of code switched words and phrases. In other words, the lower the proficiency level of the students the higher the code switching to Urdu language (L1) was produced by ESL teachers in their classrooms.

**Figure 1.** Extent of Code Switching in Low, Medium and High Level



The research may suggest that this great individual differences among three different proficiency level class teachers on the use of L1 is because of the lack of English language competency, and inability on the part of students. The student's proficiency in English language is not full-fledged. It may be claimed as the major motivating factor for the occurrence of code switching in ESL classrooms.

The results of this research are consistent with Sime's (2019) study which revealed that the higher the grade level of proficiency of the learners, the lower L1 was produced by EFL teachers. In addition, the results of Mehl's (2014) studies are consistent with this case study, which shows that the number of learners' mother tongue used by target language teachers increases when the level of proficiency of learners or the grade level of students decreases. However, it is not consistent with the findings of Sailu (2017) which found that the educational level of students does not affect the extent of use of L1 in EFL classrooms.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to explore the extent of code switching to L1 (Urdu) used by three ESL teachers at three different proficiency levels (low, medium, and high), and to show whether there are similarities or significant differences of its extent in three different proficiency level classrooms. The extent of code switching shows that there are great individual differences among the teachers, and on individual basis. Urdu language was the most frequently used by low proficiency class teacher than medium, and high proficiency class teachers. Thus, the frequency of words, phrases code switched and types of words and phrases code switched in the participant teachers' language use shows that teachers are unsurprisingly more inclined towards using L1(Urdu) more, and switch to the students' L1 due to the students' low proficiency level of English language. This indicates that there exists a conflict between the language policy EO and the actual use of Urdu language in the ESL classrooms in

Pakistan. In other words, when the proficiency level of language learners they were teaching decreases, the amount of L1 used in the English classroom increases or extent of the code switching increases regardless of actual institutional EO policy on the medium of instruction.

### *Significant Implications*

This study has significant educational implications for both the teachers and students. The results and findings of this study support the use of L1 to increase English language proficiency to L2. Due to learners limited linguistic backgrounds in L2 and low proficiency level, students need the support of their L1 in order to improve English language competency in classrooms. Therefore, there is an urgent need for educators to recognize that L1 or code switching has a primary role in the ESL classroom for students to improve their language proficiency in classroom.

Based on the findings and the conclusions of this study, the language policy along with other sensitive issues should allow the use of code switching with reference to learners' proficiency levels. Secondly, educators could recognize that code switching has a vital role in the English classroom but should consider when, how, and to what degree they use it for different proficiency levels of students.

Thus, this research indicates that code switching does exist in three different proficiency levels of ESL classrooms in Pakistan in spite of the English Only policy by its educational ministry.

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